



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Interview Summary

Date: February 11 & 13, 2007

Location: On board M/V Kition at Baton Rouge, LA

Person Interviewed: Captain Pero Metkovic, Master of the M/V Kition

Interview Conducted By: W.R. Woody
Liam Larue

Captain Metkovic was interviewed concerning the collision of the M/V Kition with the bridge pier of the I-10 highway bridge at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, which occurred on February 10, 2007. (DCA07FM013) The text that follows is not a verbatim record of the conversation. It has been developed from my handwritten notes of the conversation and is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

Captain Metkovic was provided a copy of the interview summary for review.

INTERVIEW

A State licensed pilot had come on board the vessel about 0545. The pilot informed the master that he planned to turn the vessel from the dock using three tugs. The master stated that he had objected to turning the vessel around at the berth because of the vessel's size and the close proximity of the I-10 Bridge. The master urged the pilot to take the vessel upriver and then turn it around. However, the pilot stated that it was not possible to go up river and turn because of the vessel's draft. The pilot assured him that it was standard procedure to turn at the berth.

The navigation watch included the master, chief officer, and a helmsman, and the State pilot (NOBRA 38). The chief officer operated the bridge controls for the engine and watched the helmsman to ensure that the pilot's rudder orders were executed properly. The chief officer also kept the bell book, a log of the evolutions associated with the undocking. The master maintained closed contact with the pilot to assist the pilot and to keep himself apprised of the actions of the pilot. The master stated that it was difficult to talk with the pilot because he was giving his attention to his hand held radio that he used to communicate with the tugs.

Captain Metkovic stated that in preparation for getting underway on the morning of February 10, that the crew aided by line handlers on the dock commenced taking in the vessel's mooring lines about 0700. There were three tugs holding the vessel alongside the dock while the lines were being taken in. The Peggy H was forward and had a line up to the bow, the Gladys B was midships, and the Margaret F. Cooper was pushing at the stern. The ship had four bowlines, two forward breast lines and two forward spring lines. These lines were being taken in by three crewmembers, including the bosun, and were being supervised by the second officer. The after mooring lines included four stern lines, two breast lines, and two after spring lines. Three crewmembers supervised by the third officer were responsible for taking in these lines. The after spring lines ran out from a chock (hawser hole) near the forward part of the deck house and then forward up the pier to a cleat on the dock about midships. The after spring lines were the last lines to be taken in. Because of the river current there was some tension on the after spring lines and it was necessary to go dead slow ahead on the engine to relieve the tension so that the lines could be released from the dock.

The after spring line, the last line, was clear of the dock about 0730. At this time the pilot started maneuvering the vessel away from the dock. The vessel remained parallel with the dock until it was about 5-10 meters from the dock. At this time the pilot ordered the forward tug to pull the bow to the right. The pilot ordered the midships tug to move aft and join the other tug to push on the stern.

During the turn, the pilot directed his attention to talking on the radio or cell phone and he generally did not communicate with the master. The radio channel for communicating with the tugs was Channel 77.

The second officer on the bow reported that the vessel might strike the buoy up river of the bridge pier. At this time the master and pilot both ordered the engine to full astern. The rudder was moved from hard right to midships. The pilot ordered the forward tug to stop pulling. Moments later the second officer reported that the vessel would strike the bridge pier and he urged the master to back the vessel. However, the vessel was already at full astern. The engine reached its full astern revolutions but the vessel did not gain any sternway.

The underwater hull struck the fender system demolishing the fender system on the channel side of the bridge pier. Moments later the starboard bulwark struck the bridge pier, knocking a 2-3 foot section of concrete out of the pier. The forward tug was still connected by the line to the bow at the time of collision with the bridge, and it let go its line after the fender system started collapsing and backed clear.

The bow stopped swinging and the stern of the vessel swung to the right and the vessel ended up pointing upriver. The pilot then maneuvered the vessel, aided by two tugs, into an anchorage downriver of the bridge. The vessel was anchored using both anchors with 4 shackles of chain, but the vessel yawed back and forth putting tension alternately on one anchor and then the other. The ship had to use its engines to

maintain its position. At this time there were three tugs standing by. A second pilot came aboard and NOBRA 38 departed the vessel. When a vessel in the anchorage immediately downriver moved out of its anchorage, the pilot moved the vessel downriver to that anchorage, and the vessel was anchored with two anchors and 5 shackles of chain. The ship continued to swing back and forth and it was necessary to shift the anchors several times. When the vessel was finally anchored securely, the pilot released two of the tugs but kept one tug in standby nearby.

Personal information –The master stated that he had been a third mate for about two years, second mate for about 2 years, chief mate for about 10 years, and master for about 13 years. He was a 1970 graduate of the Dubrovnik Nautical College (Visa Pomorska Skola). He had been in command of the Kition for about two days when the accident occurred. The master stated that he departed Dubrovnik, Croatia on February 6 at 1900, departed Rijeka, Croatia on February 7 at 0400, and traveled through Trieste, Italy and Munich, Germany, arriving on board the Kition late on February 7, 2007. The ship had arrived in Baton Rouge on Feb 7. He took command of the vessel at around 1800 or 1900 on Feb 9, 2007. He has 7 years of experience on ships this size/type, and probably another 5 years as chief mate. The ship had been doing lightering to Baton Rouge for the last three years. The master had been to destinations in the Mississippi River at least 10 other occasions and he had been to the Apex dock about 5 years ago on the Sadet Erkol (length approximately 130 meters), but he had never departed from the berth before.

END OF INTERVIEW

W. R. Woody
Marine Accident Investigator